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AMENDMENTS TO CLAIMS:

In the following Amendments, underlining indicates added text, while strikeout indicated deleted text.

1. (Cancelled)
2. (Cancelled)
3. (Cancelled)
4. (Cancelled)
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16. (Cancelled)

17. (Cancelled)

18. (Cancelled)

19. (Cancelled)

20. (Cancelled)

21. (Cancelled)

22. (Cancelled)

23. (New) A Gram-positive microorganism having a mutation or deletion of part or all of the gene encoding CP2, said mutation or deletion resulting in the inactivation of the CP2 proteolytic activity.

24. (New) The Gram-positive microorganism of Claim 23, that is a member of the genus *Bacillus*.

25. (New) The microorganism of Claim 24, wherein said member of the genus *Bacillus* is selected from the group consisting of *B. subtilis*, *B. licheniformis*, *B. lentus*, *B. brevis*, *B. stearothermophilus*, *B. alkalophilus*, *B. amyloliquefaciens*, *B. coagulans*, *B. circulans*, *B. lautus*, and *B. thuringiensis*.

26. (New) The microorganism of Claim 24, further comprising a mutation or deletion in at least one of the genes encoding Apr, Npr, Epr, Wpr and Mpr.

27. (New) The microorganism of Claim 24, wherein said microorganism is capable of expressing a heterologous protein.

28. (New) The microorganism of Claim 27, wherein said heterologous protein is selected from the group consisting of hormones, enzymes, growth factors, and cytokines.

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29. (New) The microorganism of Claim 28, wherein said heterologous protein is an enzyme.

30. (New) The microorganism of Claim 29, wherein said enzyme is selected from the group consisting of a proteases, carbohydrases, lipases, isomerases, racemases, epimerases, tautomerases, mutases, transferases, kinases, and phosphatases.

31. (New) A method for the production of a heterologous protein in a *Bacillus* host cell comprising the steps of

- (a) obtaining a *Bacillus* host cell comprising nucleic acid encoding said heterologous protein wherein said host cell contains a mutation or deletion in at least one of the genes encoding cysteine protease 2; and
- (b) growing said *Bacillus* host cell under conditions suitable for the expression of said heterologous protein.

32. (New) The method of Claim 31, wherein said *Bacillus* cell is selected from the group consisting of *Bacillus subtilis*, *B. licheniformis*, *B. lentus*, *B. brevis*, *B. stearothermophilus*, *B. alkalophilus*, *B. amyloliquefaciens*, *B. coagulans*, *B. circulans*, *B. lautus*, and *B. thuringiensis*.

33. (New) The method of Claim 31, wherein said *Bacillus* host cell further comprises a mutation or deletion in at least one of the genes encoding Apr, Npr, Epr, Wpr and Mpr.

34. (New) The host cell of Claim 31, wherein said heterologous protein is an enzyme.

35. (New) The host cell of Claim 34, wherein said enzyme is selected from the group consisting of proteases, carbohydrases, lipases, isomerases, racemases, epimerases, tautomerases, mutases, transferases, kinases, and phosphatases.